

The American people hold Congress in low regard, and given the debate over extending the payroll tax cut it's not hard to see why. Congress again found itself in a deadlock as taxes were set to rise by over \$1,000 next year for the average American who has a job, and unemployment benefits were set to run out for over 175,000 New Yorkers who are desperately trying to find a job. This was unacceptable, and the reason was pure politics.

Two weeks ago the U.S. Senate passed a bipartisan bill, which I co-sponsored in the House, to prevent a tax increase from going into effect. Eighty-nine Senators voted for it, including the vast majority of Republicans. If it had been brought immediately to the floor of the House for an up or down vote, it would have certainly passed with strong bipartisan support. But under pressure from the radical tea party elements in the Republican Party, Speaker John Boehner used parliamentary tricks to prevent a vote, putting us in yet another game of political chicken. Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed and tax relief is now moving forward.

It took the leadership of President Obama, Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate and Democratic leaders of the House, and the pleadings of the Wall Street Journal editorial page and millions of Americans to convince Speaker John Boehner to set aside the politics and allow an up-or-down vote. Instead, he jeopardized the economic well-being of 160 million Americans, making excuses instead of taking action.

Some Republican leaders suggested that the bipartisan deal most Americans support would provide only a temporary, two-month solution. It's true that additional legislation will be needed to extend the tax cut through 2012. What they didn't tell you, however, is that the yearlong tax cut they want contains controversial, non-budget-related measures that would gut crucial environmental laws, cut millions of dollars in Medicare and Medicaid payments to New York hospitals, hurt unemployed Americans and continue to freeze the pay of millions of middle-class federal workers.

I would gladly have supported a yearlong tax cut that doesn't contain these provisions. In fact, I am a co-sponsor of a bill that would do just that. The speaker and majority leader of the House, however, refused to allow a vote on that bill, too.

Americans are tired of seeing some lawmakers play politics while the cracks in the foundation of the nation they love grow deeper. They're sick of seeing noncontroversial legislation get tangled

up with unrelated wedge issues. They're tired of the unwillingness to compromise on job creation and deficit-reduction ideas. They're sick of the inaction and gridlock — and they should be.

I am pleased this crucial tax relief is finally moving forward, because Americans simply can't afford any more political games. We must work together to finalize a deal that extends this tax relief to the end of 2012. We must also work to halt the erosion of what little faith and confidence Americans have left in their governing institutions.